

Carter Signs Order to Reorganize Intelligence and Curb Surveillance

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 24 — President Carter today signed an executive order designed to reorganize the nation's foreign intelligence activities and to codify regulations on what intelligence agencies may or may not do under the law.

Mr. Carter, who called it "a major stride forward," promulgated the new order at a ceremony attended by numerous aides and several members of Congress. He and others termed the order unprecedented in its openness.

The Senate and House select committees on intelligence will hold hearings on the order, with the expectation that most of the provisions will become law. Eight pages of the 26-page document contain restrictions on intelligence agencies relating to covert activities, electronic counterespionage and surveillance of American citizens and resident aliens.

Some Secrecy Allowed

Yet, in brief comments, Mr. Carter acknowledged that there were some elements of foreign intelligence operations so sensitive that even an Administration committed to openness had to keep the applicable executive orders confidential. These presumably relate mainly to photographic satellite reconnaissance and electronic communications interception.

In the past these operations were governed by secret National Security Council Intelligence Directives, "N-skids" in the intelligence community jargon, and presumably the new confidential directives are repetitions of the old ones.

Senators Daniel K. Inouye, Democrat of Hawaii, and Birch Bayh, Democrat of Indiana, the past and current heads of the Select Committee on Intelligence, said at the White House ceremony that next week their panel would begin action to transform the executive order into law.

Confidence in C.I.A. Chief

They and other senators praised the President and his aides for consulting with their committee in preparation of the regulations.

Apparently mindful of a report in yesterday's Detroit News that Adm. Stansfield Turner might soon lose his post as Director of Central Intelligence and head of the C.I.A., Mr. Carter turned to him and voiced "complete confidence and satisfaction" in his performance.

He also lauded the "professionalism and competence" of the intelligence community as a whole and the "superb" coordination

of intelligence effected by Admiral Turner.

The new regulations, replacing an executive order issued in February 1976 and amplified in May and June of that year by President Ford, contain some significant changes.

In addition to establishing new supervisory bodies, they also empower the Attorney General to oversee compliance with American laws in all activities of the intelligence agencies.

The regulations require the President himself to authorize, and the Attorney General to approve, every counterintelligence operation involving electronic or physical surveillance of a suspected foreign agent, an arrangement that espionage specialists said they regarded as cumbersome and possibly unworkable.

Requirement for Warrants

Apparently the executive order will lead to a system under which surveillance of foreign espionage suspects by "intrusive" technical means, even when authorized by the President, would require warrants authorized by the courts.

Another innovation is that all counterintelligence operations, hitherto dispersed among such agencies as the C.I.A., the Treasury Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Defense Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, would be coordinated by a panel of the National Security Council.

That panel, called the special coordinating committee, will be headed by Zbigniew Brzezinski, the head of the council, who is also involved in committees that set intelligence priorities, authorize covert operations and help prepare the annual intelligence budget, now about \$6 billion.

The principal difference between the 1976 executive order by Mr. Ford and the new order is that Mr. Carter has chosen to be very explicit in defining the responsibilities, restrictions and oversight functions of the intelligence community.

But the new regulations also give the Director of Central Intelligence more power to coordinate the intelligence gathered by the various agencies, the power to direct completion of the intelligence budget and to supervise the assignment of intelligence tasks.

The order makes clear that the principle of dissent will be retained even at the highest level of the many-layered authority governing the community, and that competition in intelligence analysis will be stressed.